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5th February 2015

Councillor Ramesh Patel,
Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Sustainability,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Patel,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 3rd February 2015

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 3rd February 2015. As you are aware the meeting considered the “Draft Corporate Plan 2015 – 2017 & 2015/16 Draft Budget Proposals.” In reviewing these proposals the Committee used the following documents to set the context of the discussion:

- Draft Corporate Plan – 2015 - 17;
- Equality Impact Assessments;
- Draft Budget Proposals;
- Capital Programme;
- Employee Budget Implications Table;
- Results of the Cardiff Debate consultation – ‘Changes for Cardiff – Consultation Results & Feedback Report on the City of Cardiff Council’s 2015/16 Budget Proposals’.

This letter contains the recommendations, observations and requests for information agreed by Members during the Way Forward at the end of the meeting, which we hope will be of assistance to you in shaping the final budget recommendations. The draft budget proposals which fall within your portfolio of responsibility are listed below and broken down by Directorate:

Draft Budget Proposals - Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport Directorate

SPH11 – Schools Crossing Patrols – Realign Budget

- When discussing the implications of cutting £45,000 from the ‘Schools Crossing Patrols Budget’ Members raised the practicality of investing monies into this area. They were concerned that in the medium to long term there would be insufficient funding available to provide adequate school crossing patrols. The Committee felt that a complete change in approach was required and that the Council should consider implementing 20 mph zones around all schools and many other parts of the city. A Member explained that there was strong evidence to suggest that similar schemes work well in Germany and that they were very cost effective when compared with alternatives; they also managed to improve road safety. These schemes would only need to be implemented once and ongoing maintenance would be minimal. The new schemes would need to be publicised and actively enforced; particularly at the start. Once the 20 mph schemes were established they would provide a cost effective measure for improving road safety.
- Members acknowledge that the behaviour of drivers and pedestrians would need to be challenged and supported by educational initiatives to make a potential 20 mph zone effective.
- Members are aware of the ongoing trial in the Cathays and Roath areas. They would be grateful if you could forward on any available results from this trial for their consideration.
- Members are very keen for the Council to implement the ‘car cam’ system which they believe would improve road safety and parking standards around schools. The Committee feels that the new vehicles would be self funding and able to cover a far larger area than the Civil Parking Enforcement officers can manage on foot.

SPH15 – Planning – Increase in development fee income target

- The Committee believes that the £50,000 increase in planning income is small when compared to the overall potential income which could be generated. A combination of an upturn in the housing market, fees for large planning developments and a potential uplift in fee income during 2015 seems to support this argument. The Members would, therefore, ask you to review the planning fee income as they believe a target increase of £100,000 is achievable. Such an increase would provide the opportunity to relieve budgetary pressures in other areas.

SPH18 – Highways Street Lighting – LED conversion main routes;

SPH19 - Highways – Dimming of Street Lights.

- The Committee agreed that the introduction of new street lighting technology to achieve budget savings was a positive step as it could save the Council money and reduce its carbon footprint. They believe that modern lighting systems are able to provide good lighting without compromising personal safety.
- Members are keen that the Council investigates the option of introducing solar powered streetlights; these are capable of generating enough electricity to power good quality street lighting and would also help reduce the Council's electricity bill.

SPH25 – Moving Traffic Offences

- The Committee considered that the £450,000 target for Moving Traffic Offences was a low estimate. A Member cited a press release in January which was in fact a statement sent to the Echo which said that “3,544 penalty notices have been issued between December 1 and December 31st for bus lane contraventions. Offenders have a 21 day period to either pay £35 or appeal against the decision”. A simple calculation, assuming they are all paid within 21 days, suggests that a monthly income of £124,000 is possible but the Committee accepts that bus lane infringements will decline in the months to come. However, the scheme

will expand and focus on key yellow box junctions on the main arterial routes in and out of Cardiff and illegal parking around schools which could exceed the December income although that too will decay over time. The Director for Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport accepted that the estimate was conservative, however, he assured the Committee that it needed to be as the scheme is new and it is difficult to project the full year results with any accuracy. The item was discussed during the Way Forward and:

- The Committee noted that all the income received is ring-fenced to pay for the scheme and other transport related initiatives but would recommend that an income target be set for £750,000 which, if achieved, would help to indirectly relieve budgetary pressures elsewhere in the council.
- The Committee would like detail on the number of tickets issued to date along with an estimate of how much income these will generate.
- I would like to remind you that at our meeting in November 2014 the Members agreed to revisit Moving Traffic Offences for a progress update within 6 months. I will ensure that it is included in our work programme.

Civil Parking Enforcement

- During the meeting Members were told that in December there were nine Civil Parking Enforcement officer vacancies and that recruitment into these posts had proved difficult. I would be grateful if you could let the Committee know why these vacancies existed, how many vacancies we currently hold and comment as to why it is so difficult to recruit new staff into the role.
- Could you please provide a summary of the number of fixed penalty notices issued year to date along with the total number issued during 2012/13 and 2013/14. The Committee are keen to establish if there are any obvious trends for the number of parking offences in Cardiff.

- When discussing the income generated by Moving Traffic Offences, parking charges and Civil Parking Offences the Committee looked at the structure of the Civil Parking Enforcement budget listed in Appendix 3a of the papers. A Member queried the 'Other Expenditure' of £4,594,080 listed against this line and asked what it was for; the explanation was that it was a payment for transport related items to other budget lines, i.e. contributions from the parking revenue account. I would be grateful if you could provide greater detail on the 'Other Expenditure' to include which cost codes the monies were being paid to and the type of work it was being used to fund.

SPH26 – Parking Strategy – to increase parking charges in accordance with the Parking Policy

- SPH26 explained that an additional £85,000 of income would be raised from parking charges. A Member commented that the Council had recently raised the fees in long stay car parks and that after an initial dip in income the actual amount of monies collected had increased. He felt that the Council should do the same with short stay car parking and has asked for an update on when these will be reviewed as they could bring in important additional income.

Line 34 – Draft Capital Programme 2015/16 to 2019/20 – Central Square – Bus Station

- Line 34 of the Draft Capital Programme 2015/16 to 2019/20 sets aside £14 million for the development of a new bus station. A Member was very keen to find out which funding sources would be used to fund this development and if it would be possible to use section 106 funding or the Community Infrastructure Levy to partially fund this development. I understand that the public state of funds are complex, but I would appreciate it if you could provide the Committee with the proposed funding details.

Review of Schools Transport Policy

- A Member explained that he was aware of an ongoing review into School's Transport Policy. This was reviewing, amongst other things, the provision of transport for children who attended schools outside of their designated catchment area. I would be grateful if you could provide an update on this review and outline a timescale for the completion of this piece of work.

Draft Budget Proposals – Environment Directorate

ENV14 – Renewable Energy Generation

- When discussing the potential income available from renewable energy the Members raised the idea of investing in solar panels. It was explained that it is difficult to take a renewable energy investment decision on Council buildings at the moment as it is not clear which buildings will remain within the Council estate in the medium term. The Committee strongly believe that we are missing out on an opportunity to generate solar energy on buildings like County Hall. They feel that the Council is failing to take a decisive decision on the matter. The failure to implement such schemes in good time is viewed as a missed opportunity. It was also noted that solar panels are easily removed and if required they could easily be installed on other buildings.
- The Committee believes that more could be done to introduce vehicles which use electricity or other alternative fuels into the Council's fleet. The Council does not at the moment have any vehicles which are powered on electricity or alternative fuels; however, there are opportunities for the Council to invest in vehicles which could reduce fuel costs and the Council's carbon footprint. The Members have asked that you to look into these options.

ENV15 – Energy Savings (Council Wide)

- The Committee noted the £90,000 energy reduction savings from across the Council's estate through measures such as better house keeping. The Director for the Environment felt that with good corporate support greater savings could be achieved than those set out in the budget line. Members would support this and encourage all Council staff to engage in workplace energy saving measures where possible.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the requests made in this letter.

Regards,



Councillor Paul Mitchell
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc to:

Andrew Gregory, Director for Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport

Jane Forshaw, Director for the Environment

Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources

Marcia Sinfield, Operational Manager – Projects & Technical Accountancy

Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

Cheryl Cornelius, Cabinet Support Officer

Paul Keeping, Operational Manager – Scrutiny Services

Councillor Michael Michael, Chair of the Planning Committee

Councillor Nigel Howells, Chair of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee